February 5, 2010

Washington, DC – On Wednesday, Rep. Ben Ray Luján questioned Administration officials on their efforts to improve airport security. Improved screening technology could include MagViz, a scanning machine developed at Los Alamos National Laboratory that adapts Magnetic Resonance Imaging techniques to identify concealed liquids. Rep. Luján urged officials to actively engage the national laboratories in developing screening technology. Rep. Luján pointed out that the new security challenge today is not metal, but liquids and other materials that are difficult to detect. He emphasized that the Administration should invest in liquid-detecting technology like MagViz in addition to traditional metal-detecting technology.

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Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation.

"The MagViz system represents an improvement over our current magnetometer-dependant security scans that can detect only a very limited number of metal objects," said Rep. Luján. "As we reform our airport security procedures, it is imperative that we implement new technologies that are capable of detecting new threats and deterring future attacks."

"We need a systems-level approach to working through threat. MagViz is part of that system, but DHS and TSA need to go further to further apply the labs knowledge to best protect the traveling public. Our National Labs are home to some of our nation's best scientists and most cutting edge technology. As we look to solve the most pressing problems facing our nation, including security at our airports, we should look to our National Labs."

Rep. Luján has advocated for expanded use of MagViz in the past. On February 25, 2009, Rep. Luján encouraged Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to consider broader use of MagViz technology when she testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security. Earlier this year, Rep. Ben Ray Luján sent a letter to Secretary Napolitano, urging the Department to consider expanding the use of MagViz technology at airports throughout the United States. Following Rep. Luján's letter, President Barack Obama called on the Department of Homeland Security to work "aggressively, in cooperation with the Department of Energy and our National Labs, to develop and deploy the next generation of screening technology."

MagViz—a new technology that has been developed by the scientists at Los Alamos National Laboratory—is a scanning machine that adapts Magnetic Resonance Imaging techniques to identify concealed liquids. As items are screened through MagViz, the machine is able to identify dangerous or suspicious liquids based upon their unique chemical fingerprints